

The Writers' Assistant Life: How to Get Fired

Contributed by Ariel

Hi, Nexus-ers. Last time, we talked about cutting the umbilical cord, so to speak – when to leave a writers' assistant job that's not helping your own writing. This week, we're going to talk about how to get fired. That's right – everything you should do to get fired from the job; only, you should do the opposite to keep it (assuming "it" is not working on the type of show I discussed last week, one that just uses you (because they can) and won't help you).

1) Be negative… all the time. Instead of being that happy-go-lucky, upbeat assistant of yesteryear, the one you used to be, the one who intrigued people with her optimism and no one understood how she found typing other people's words so much fun, find a reason to complain – about everything. You're overworked, you're underpaid, you missed your boyfriend's soccer game (and let's not forget about your mom's birthday dinner) because of a last-minute rewrite… The show sucks, the writers suck, you hate your life, you hate TV, etc., etc. (I'm sure you can think of more). The more negative, the better. And be sure to verbalize these complaints to everybody, from the PAs to the writers themselves. A hole-in-one for getting fired, trust me.

2) Don't do your job well. Again, I'm sure you could fill in the blanks here, but I'll get you started… Make as many typos as possible, never proofread the script, IM friends instead of taking good notes, don't organize your notes, so when the writers need them, you don't have them (or the notes are so meager and bad, that'll teach them to ask you for notes)… Just fuck up every chance you get. 3) Don't get to know your co-workers. I mean, what's the point? Why make small talk (and learn and bond over the fact that you're both from the same hick town in Indiana) with people who could potentially hire you onto another show someday? Why get to know them, the people who could later ask to read your specs -- and pass them on to their agents? Why befriend other assistants when they're "just assistants," not writers with their own shows (you'd be surprised at how quickly this could change, FYI)? The more people on your side, the better – it only takes one person to help you, and you never know which person that'll be. I hope you get the point. My point is… …shows don't want to hire you if you're negative. True, maybe they don't yet know how negative you are – you were a great actor in your interview, so they hired you, anyway. But, believe me, the bitter assistant within will come out. So I'll amend my statement: Shows don't want to keep you if you're negative. There are more than enough burnt-out assistants out here; you don't need to be another one (unless you want to live on unemployment… which isn't always that bad; but that discussion's for another time). Even if they don't fire you, the way not to re-hire you (or not to recommend you to other shows) is by doing the above three steps. If you are really miserable, quit (see last week's blog). Shows want someone who's excited to do the job (even when the WA is not excited 100% of the time, but like it enough that they can fake it a bit when the typing gets tough). Yes, typing for a living gets boring; you might as well go be a court reporter, right? But, on the right show, being a WA could be a great experience (see my second blog on "pros and cons of the job" for more on that). So, until next time, good luck… on getting fired. ;) Questions? Concerns? Compliments? :) Justaskariel@yahoo.com.